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THE LAST STROKE OF FORTUNE.

Thirty years ago, an old house was standing in Cologne, which showed to the street a frontage of five small windows. It was the house in which the first painter of the Flemish school—the immortal Rubens—was born, A. D. 1577. Sixty years later than this date, the ground floor was occupied by two old people—a shoemaker and his wife. The upper story, which was usually let to lodgers, was empty at the time we write of. Two, however, occupied the garret. The evening was cold and wet, and the shoemaker and his wife were sitting together in the room.

"You had better go up stairs again," said the man to his wife, "and see how the poor lady is. The old gentleman went out early, and has not been in since. Has she not taken anything?"

"It is only half an hour since I was up stairs, and he had not come in. I took her some broth up at noon, but she hardly touched it, and I was up again at three; she was asleep then, and at five she said she should not want anything more."

"Poor lady! This time of year, and neither fire nor warm clothes, and not even a decent bed to lie on; and yet I am sure she is somebody or other. Have you noticed the respect with which the old gentleman treats her?"

"If she wants for anything it is her own fault. That ring she wears on her finger would get her the best of everything."

Then came a knock at the door; the woman admitted the old man they had just spoken of, whose grizzled beard fell upon his tarnished velvet coat. The hostess sadly wanted to have a little gossip with him; but he passed by, and, bidding them a short "Good night," groped his way up the steep and crooked staircase. On entering the chamber above, a feeble voice inquired the cause of his long absence.

"I could not help it," he said, "I had been copying manuscript, and as I was on my way here a servant met me, who was to fetch me to raise the horoscope of two ladies who were passing through; they were ladies who I have known before. I thought I could get a little money to pay for some simples which will be of service to you."

"I am cold."

"It is fever cold. I will make you something which you must take directly."

The flame of a small tin lamp sufficed to heat some water, and the patient, having taken what the old man had provided, was diligently covered up by him with all the clothes and articles of dress he could find. He stood by her motionless till he perceived that she was fast asleep, and indeed long after; he then retired into a small closet, and sought repose on the hard floor.

The next morning the lady was so much better that her attendant proposed she should endeavor to leave the house for a moment or two, and he succeeded in getting her forth as far as the Place St. Cecilia. It was seldom that she left the house, for, notwithstanding the meanness of her dress, there was that about her carriage which rendered it difficult to avoid unpleasant observation.

"Do you see that person yonder?" she said suddenly. "If I am not much mistaken it is certainly the Duke of Guise."

The stranger's attention had also been attracted, and he had now approached them.

"*Parbleu!*" said he, "why that is Mascali. What, are you married?"

"He does not know me," sighed the lady. "I must indeed be altered."

Mascali had, however, whispered a single word in the duke's ear, and he started as if struck by a thunderbolt, but instantly recovering himself, he hastily uncovered, and bowed nearly to the ground.

"I beg your forgiveness," he said; "but my eyes are grown so weak, and I could so little expect to have the honor of meeting your"——

"For the love of God," interrupted the lady, hastily, "name me not here. A title would too strangely contrast with my present circumstances. Have you been long in Cologne?"

"Three days. I am on my way from Italy. I took refuge there when our common enemy drove me forth, and confiscated all my earthly goods. I am going to Brussels."

"And what are your advices from France? Is the helm still in the hands of that wretched caitiff?"

"He is in the zenith of his power."

"See, my lord duke, your fortunes and my own are much alike. You, the son of a man who, had he not too much despised danger, might well have set the crown on his own head, and I at once the Queen of the mightiest nation in the universe, and now both of us alike. But adieu," she said suddenly, and drawing herself up, "the sight of you, my lord duke, has refreshed me much, and I pray that fortune once more may smile upon your steps."

"Permit me to attend your majesty to——"

A slight color tinged the lady's features, as she answered, with a gentle commanding tone: "Leave us, my lord duke, it is our pleasure."

Guise bowed low, and taking the lady's hand, he pressed it reverently to his lips. At the corner of the street he met some one, to whom he pointed out the old lady, and then hastened away.

The next morning a knock at the door announced a person inquiring for Monsieur Mascali; she had a small packet for him, and also a billet. Inside this was distinctly written:

"Two hundred louis d'ors constitute the whole of my fortune: one hundred I send for your use.
"GUISE."

And the packet contained a hundred louis d'ors.

The sum thus obtained sufficed to supply the wants of the pair two long years. But the last louis had been changed, and the lady and her companion were still without friendly succor. The shoemaker and his wife had undertaken a journey to Aix la Chapelle, to take up some small legacy. It was the 13th February, 1642. A low sound of moaning might have been heard issuing from the garret; a withered female form, more like a skeleton than a thing of flesh and blood, was lying on a wretched bed of straw, in the agonies of death. The moans grew more and more indistinct; a slight ratling in the throat was at length the only audible sound, and this also ceased. An hour later an old man, dressed in rags and tatters, entered the chamber. One only word had escaped his lips as he tumbled up the falling staircase—"Nothing! nothing!" He drew near the bed listlessly, but in a moment seized an arm of the corpse with an almost convulsive motion, and, letting it suddenly fall, he cried—"Dead, dead, of hunger, cold, and starvation!"

And this lady was Mary of Medicis, wife of Henry IV, Queen Regent of France; mother of Louis XIII; of Isabella, Queen of Spain; of Henrietta, Queen of England, of Christina, Duchess of Savoy; of Gaston, Duke of Orleans; dead of hunger, cold and misery; and yet Louis XIII, the cowardly tool of Richelieu, his mother's murderer, is still called "the Just."

REV. THEO. PARKER ON CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN'S LADY MACBETH.—"A thousand years ago your and my Saxon forefathers, living in mean hovels, for their sport had mimic battles, wherein with quarter staves, or spears, or swords, men laid at each other in their savage joy, and were often hurt and sometimes slain. Looking at that howling wilderness of amusement, who could have foreseen the time in another land peopled by other Saxons—in Boston—two thousand Christian men and women should come together in a theatre, paying large prices to see a great scene of ambitious human life, done into magnificent language by an old English Saxon poet, chiefest of his tribe, and that grand poetry enacted into a grand drama by a New England Saxon woman, who transfigured his thoughts to life, teaching how the justice of God comes and torments the murderer, and her who incites the murderer, walking in such ghastly sleep? Who, a thousand years ago, in the rough sports of our Saxon fathers, could have imagined a Boston audience thrilled with æsthetic and religious delight at seeing Macbeth fitly enacted by fitting men and women?"—*Boston Sat. Eve Gazette.*

A WOMAN OF NERVE.

Mrs. Caroline C. Stranburg, wife of P. P. Stranburg, of this city, says the Bloomington, Ill., Pantagraph, was a passenger on the Pennsylvania, which was burned to the water's edge in the Mississippi, sixty miles below Memphis, on Sunday morning, 12th instant. Mrs. S left her berth just before the explosion took place; and when she heard the report, which shook every piece of timber in the boat, she caught hold of her little child, which was only two months old, and rushed into the ladies cabin, at the very moment that a large piece of machinery came crashing through the floor. She ran to the captain's room and told him that the boat was on fire, but he said she was mistaken, and advised her to be calm. She said she was *not* mistaken, and her manner was so earnest that the captain, thinking she *might* be correct, went down to the boiler deck. He returned in a short time, and remarked to Mrs.: "There is no danger now—the fire has been subdued." Mrs. S., however, would not be convinced; she insisted that the boat was in flames, and told the captain to make preparations for saving the passengers. As she finished speaking, the flames broke through the cabin door, and in less than a minute the cabin was filled with smoke. She saw that the time for action had arrived, and she knew that her life and that of her child depended upon her own exertions; so she went down the private staircase, and was fortunate enough to reach the boiler deck in safety. Knowing that she would perish by fire if she stayed on the boat, she determined to leave it and run the risk of meeting her death by another method. She accordingly seized a board about seven feet long and eight or ten inches wide, and grasping her child with one arm and the board with the other, plunged into the river.

The current, owing to the high stage of water, was very rapid, and Mrs. S. had as much as she could do to keep herself and child above the surface; but she proved equal to the dangerous situation in which she was placed, and her perilous journey down the river would not have been attended with half the danger that it was, if her unselfish heart had not prompted her to save a man who was unable to save himself. A short time after leaving the boat, she saw a man struggling in the water, and she knew from his movements that he was too much exhausted to save himself from going to the bottom; so she generously and nobly jeopardized her life to save his; she grasped him by the arm, at the risk of being pulled from her frail support, and assisted him getting upon a little piece of plank that was hardly sufficient to keep herself and child above the surface of the Father of Waters. After floating for an hour and a half, the three were rescued by some men, who, having heard the explosion, launched a small boat and started up stream to render assistance to the unfortunate sufferers. When the man who was rescued by Mrs. Stranburg placed his feet in the boat, he tried to express the gratitude which he felt for his preserver; but his heart was so full of thankfulness that his tongue refused to give utterance to his grateful feelings. Mrs. Strandburg left this city about three months ago, and went to Clinton, Mississippi, her birthplace, where her relatives reside. She took passage on the Pennsylvania, at Vicksburg, and was fortunate enough to arrive at her own house in this city, on Monday evening. Her conduct entitles her to the admiration of all who can appreciate a noble act.

THE FALLEN GIRLS OF PARIS.

A Paris correspondent makes the following highly interesting statements:

In London, no lady dare walk out unattended after 8 o'clock in the evening, and after 11 o'clock she will have her eyes and ears insulted, no matter how well attended; while at Paris she may remain in the streets to any hour of the night, and neither have her eyes offended nor her ears insulted.

How is this happy result accomplished? In 1851, the official register of the police of Paris showed 4,300 public girls on its books; the number now may be stated at 5,000. These girls, and the houses in which they live, are submitted to a series of stringent laws, which renders them innoxious and inoffensive to the community—the police adopting the principle that, since it is impossible to suppress the evil, it should be rendered as inoffensive to the public eye and to the public salubrity as possible. All these houses are obliged to be closed at 11 o'clock precisely. The girls are obliged to remain in the house, and the windows are always covered with blinds, night and day. A few girls are permitted, here and there, to walk up and down, in front of their door, from 7 to 11 o'clock precisely, but it is against the law to accost the passers by. The houses are visited once a week by a medical and an ordinary inspector—real inspectors, appointed by Government, and not humbugging ward politicians.

Another class of girls, and much the larger class, are those who frequent the public balls, concerts, and theatres—girls who live alone in public lodging houses, and who, for the most part, are not enrolled on the police books, nor submitted to the ordinary sanitary regulations. But this class are no more permitted than the rest, either in the street or at their favorite evening resorts, to accost people for the purposes of commerce. The streets and the public balls are full of policemen in citizens dress, whose business is to detect such girls as violate the law in regard to addressing people, and to put their names on the police books, thus requiring them to take out a license, and to submit to all the police regulations in the new class to which they have entered. As a girl regards herself as forever lost when her name is once placed on the police book, and as she never knows when an officer's eye may be upon her, she takes good care not to violate, if possible, this law prohibiting solicitations in public. This class are always elegantly dressed—it is notorious even that they are the first to imitate and to propagate those very fashions which make the tour of the world as the latest Paris modes. Many of them are reserved and elegant in their manners, and require a punctiliousness of etiquette which would not be out of place in the most aristocratic saloon. But one of the great aids to the Paris police, in the maintenance of public decency in this class, is the fact that they do not use strong drinks; a drunken public woman is never seen. As liquor is the greatest debaser of mankind, this one fact strikes out a marked line of distinction between this class here and in England and the United States. The great majority do not lose their self-respect, and they take good care of their health, hoping later on to reform and get married. This is here the rule, whereas in England and the United States, they throw themselves away as fast as possible.

THE MORALS OF CHICAGO.—The Chicago Times makes revelations implicating the Mayor of the city, one of his police deputies who is a deacon of the church, and other parties, in a most degrading and infamous scheme to procure evidence against certain parties for the violation of law. The facts stated were brought out on a trial before the Recorder. It seems from the evidence adduced that Mayor Haines and Deacon Ambrose employed one Jas. Brown to visit disreputable houses for the purpose of cohabitation with the inmates, in order to secure personal knowledge which would admit of no doubt, and result in the conviction of the poor fallen creatures. Deacon Ambrose admits that he did so employ Brown, and Brown swears that he did so act, and received from Deacon Ambrose "nine dollars per week *and* expenses." This money came out of the city treasury, and Brown has been thus employed since the middle of March.

☞ There is one way by which conscription is avoided in Egypt. The regulations require that the person shall have a left eye and right forefinger. The result is that the cunning Arab coolly cuts off the right hand forefinger and puts out the left eye. Over one-third of the grown up males in Egypt are thus mutilated!

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